



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Developments in Kazakhstan

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 14, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In recent weeks, the Kazakhstani delegation, and Kazakhstan's Minister of Justice, have kindly briefed both this Permanent Council and also in formal meetings on recent reforms adopted by that government.

We welcome President Nazarbayev's statement on May 16th that Kazakhstan is now ready to enact "liberal reforms" and to establish new counterweights in the balance of power between different branches and institutions of Kazakhstan's government.

While some elements of the constitutional reform package passed by parliament advance reform more than others, on balance, we believe that the package adopted is an important first step toward advancing the reform process in Kazakhstan.

Some of the amendments appear to have the potential to increase the role of political parties and the powers of parliament vis-a-vis the president and government, as well as to expand the scope of political activity if opposition political parties fully participate. Kazakhstan's implementation of these measures is now key.

We are concerned about the passage of one amendment which exempts President Nazarbayev from presidential term limits. In contrast to the other amendments that had considerable discussion, this amendment was added to the package at the last minute with no discussion.

We continue to encourage the Government of Kazakhstan to carry out its stated desire to implement democratic reforms. We look to the Government of Kazakhstan to honor its commitments to democratic reform and freedom of speech.

Similarly, while the announced reforms are important, we remain convinced that further reforms are crucial for Kazakhstan's democratic evolution. We encourage Kazakhstan to undertake other concrete reforms, including: easing registration requirements for political parties; enacting a new electoral law in line with OSCE standards; implementing a law that allows direct election of local leaders; and enacting a new media law in line with OSCE standards.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.